

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A post-operative chest support worn by a patient comprising: a chest encircling band having a portion of stretchable material that is uniformly stretchable along the entire circumference of the band and the band has a base tension, wherein the band includes a tensioning means located within a pocket on a front surface of the band that is actuable by the patient to vary the tension of the band between the base tension and another tension, such that the band automatically returns to the base tension when the patient releases the tensioning means.
2. (ORIGINAL) The support according to claim 1, wherein the band has shoulder straps mounted thereon.
3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A support according to claim 1 wherein the band is secured around the chest of a patient with hook-and-loop fasteners.
4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A support according to claim 1 wherein the tensioning means is a handle.
5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A support according to claim 1 wherein the band is a flexible material having a uniform width.
6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A support according to claim 1 which lacks a mechanical moving part for mechanically adjusting the tension or any other such skin irritating feature.
7. (CANCELED)
8. (CANCELED)

9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A method of altering the tension applied to a patient's chest following surgery, said method including the steps of:

positioning a post-operative chest support band across the chest of a patient wherein the band includes a stretchable material that is uniformly stretchable along the entire circumference of the band and a tensioning means positioned on a front surface of the band that is actuatable by the patient;

securing the band at a base tension;

increasing or decreasing the tension of the band by the patient applying pressure to the tensioning means; and

releasing the tensioning means by the user to return the band to the base tension.

10. (NEW) A post-operative chest support for a patient comprising:

a chest encircling band of stretchable material of constant width and uniformly stretchable along the circumference of the band, wherein the band has a base tension while worn by the patient;

a tensioning means located on a front surface of the band that is actuatable by the patient to vary the tension of the band between the base tension and another tension, such that the band automatically returns to the base tension when the patient releases the tensioning means.

11. (NEW) A support according to claim 10 wherein the tensioning means is a handle that is accessible by the patient.

12. (NEW) A support according to claim 10 wherein the tensioning means is disposed within a pocket.

13. (NEW) A support according to claim 10 wherein the tensioning means is removably attached to the band.

14. (NEW) The support according to claim 10 wherein a first securing system fixes the support about a patient's chest at the base tension, and the tensioning means comprises at

least a pair of handles at a base tension position that can move towards each other when pushed to adjust tension and be pulled away from each other to adjust tension, the handles returning to the base tension position when pushing and/or pulling of the handles is stopped.

15. (NEW) The support of claim 14 wherein the at least a pair of handles is located within pockets on the front of the vest.

16. (NEW) The support of claim 15 where the at least a pair of handles is hidden from view by the pockets when at the base tension position.

17. (NEW) The method of claim 9 wherein the securing of the band at a base tension is done when the patient is in an exhaling phase of respiration.

18. (NEW) The method of claim 17 wherein the securing is done without stretching the band, and after securing, the patient increases or decreases tension by pushing or pulling on handles to alter the tension, and then stopping the pulling or pushing, causing tension to immediately return to the base tension.